AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A data processing method for a customer request comprising:

receiving a request for ~~at least one~~an item from a customer data processing system at a central data processing system, wherein the request includes an item identifier associated with the item;

generating a plurality of sub-requests for sub-items of the item, each of the sub-items are mapped to the item based on the item identifier and sub-item identifiers associated with the sub-items, wherein the sub-requests are assigned to a plurality of external or internal partner systems based on predefined rules ~~where each sub-request is associated with at least one item of the request and each sub-request is assigned to an internal or external system by means of rules~~;

generating a separate unique identifier for each of the sub-requests;

storing the unique identifiers being assigned to the sub-requests, in a retrievable medium with the associated item by the central data processing system;

sending the sub-requests with the unique identifiers to partner systems;

receiving sub-responses at the central data processing system, each sub-response having a unique identifier that is the same as the unique identifier of the corresponding sub-request;

matching the sub-response to the sub-request based on the unique identifiers;

generating a response based on association of the sub-responses with the original item;

sending the response back to the customer data processing system.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said sending of the sub-requests to partner systems further comprises at least one of:

-sending a sub-request for a partner search or a partner availability check at item level or:

-determining at least one business system or an availability check for this system at item level.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein performing of the partner search is done with the use of functions.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the functions comprise standard functions, as well as functions of customers and partners.

5.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the partner system which received the request for availability check temporarily reserves a requested resource that has been identified as available.

6.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the partner system deletes the reservation for the requested resources unless the central data processing system sends a message if no acceptance is received from the customer within the predetermined time interval.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the request comprises a plurality of items, the method comprising performing the following operations for each item:

          receiving the request from the customer data processing system at the central data processing system;

          generating the plurality of sub-requests for the plurality of partner systems

          generating the separate unique identifier for each of the sub-requests;

          storing the unique identifiers being assigned to the sub-requests, in the retrievable medium with the associated item by the central data processing system;

          sending the sub-requests with the unique identifiers to partner systems;

          receiving sub-responses at the central data processing system

          matching the sub-response to the sub-request based on the unique identifiers; and

          generating the response based on association of the sub-responses with the original item.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein the request comprising the plurality of items is processed in a looping mode.

9.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the request for the at least one item has a structure of an order-like document that comprises:
    -a header section;
    -at least one item;
    -at least one schedule line per item comprising information requested by the customer including a delivery date and a quantity.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein generating the plurality of sub-requests for a plurality of partner systems includes criteria defined by the customer.

11.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the following operations conducted prior to sending the response back to the customer data processing system:
    -comparing at least one sub-response to the preferred choice specified by a customer;
    -selecting a preferred choice from the group consisting of the at least one sub-response.

12.   (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the act of selecting the preferred choice is based on the customer's preferences.

13.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein asynchronous communication means are used and the sub-responses are aggregated in the database until all sub-responses have been received.

14.   (Currently Amended) A central data processing system for processing of the customer request comprising:
    means for receiving the request for ~~at least one~~an item from a customer data processing system at a central data processing system, wherein the request includes an item identifier associated with the item;

means for generating a plurality of sub-requests for <u>sub-items of the item, each of the sub-items are mapped to the item based on the item identifier and sub-item identifiers associated with the sub-items, wherein each sub-request is assigned to an</u> external or internal ~~plurality of~~ partner <u>based on the predefined rules</u> ~~s where each sub-request is associated with one item of the request and each sub-request is assigned to an internal or external system by means of the rules~~;

means for generating a separate unique identifier for each of the sub-requests;

means for storing the unique identifiers being assigned to the sub-requests, in a retrievable medium with the associated item by the central data processing system;

means for sending the sub-requests with the unique identifiers to the partner systems;

means for receiving sub-responses at the central data processing system, each sub-response having a unique identifier that is the same as the unique identifier of the corresponding sub-request;

means for the matching the sub-responses to the sub-requests based on the unique identifiers;

means for generating a response based on association of the sub-responses with the original item;

means for sending the response back to the customer data processing system.

15.   (Previously Presented) The central data processing system of claim 14, wherein a central data processing system further comprises interfaces for communication between a sales system, the purchasing system, the manufacturing system, the planning system and other internal or external systems.

16.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 14, further comprising asynchronous communication means to use database tables for storage of the sub-responses.

17.   (Original) The system of claim 16, wherein the means of generating a response based on association of the sub-responses with the original item and sending the response back to the customer data processing system, in case of the asynchronous communication, are applied only when all the requested sub-responses are collected in the database.

18.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the asynchronous communication means are to execute a query to determine if all necessary sub-responses have been collected.

19.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium holding code to:

receive a request for ~~at least one~~an item from a customer data processing system at a central data processing system, wherein the request includes an item identifier associated with the item;

generate a plurality of sub-requests for sub-items of the item, each of the sub-items are mapped to the item based on the item identifier and sub-item identifiers associated with the sub-items, wherein each sub-request is assigned to~~for a~~ and external or internal ~~plurality of~~ partner systems based on the predefined rules ~~s where each sub-request is associated with at least one item of the request and each sub-request is assigned to an internal or external system by means of rules~~;

generate a separate unique identifier for each of the sub-requests;

store the unique identifiers being assigned to the sub-requests with the associated item by the central data processing system, in a retrievable medium;

send the sub-requests with the unique identifiers to partner systems;

receive sub-responses at the central data processing system, each sub-response having a unique identifier that is identical to the unique identifier of the corresponding sub-request;

matching the sub-responses to the sub-requests based on the unique identifiers;

generate a response based on association of the sub-responses with the original item;

send the response back to the customer data processing system.

20.   (Currently Amended) A data processing system for processing a request for an item, the data processing system comprising:

-means for selecting an asynchronous or a synchronous communication mode for communication with partner computer systems,

-means for splitting the request into a set of sub-requests, <u>wherein each sub-request is for a sub-item of the item, each sub-item is mapped to the item based on an item identifier associated with the item and a sub-item identifier associated with the sub-item</u> ~~wherein each sub-request is associated with at least one item of the request~~,

-synchronous communication means being adapted to send a first one of the sub-requests of the set of sub-requests to one of the partner computer systems, wait for the respective sub-response from the one of the partner computer systems and send a second one of the sub-requests of the set of sub-requests to one of the partner computer systems after the sub-response has been received, wherein the sub-responses are stored in a random access memory with the associated item by the data processing system,

-asynchronous communication means being adapted to send the sub-requests in parallel to the partner computer systems, store respective sub-responses of the partner computer systems in a database on a non-volatile storage device with the associated item by the data processing system, means for combining the sub-responses to generate a response to the request,

-means for generating a first unique identifier for each of the sub-requests, the first unique identifiers are generated by the data processing system;

-means for generating a second unique identifier for each of the sub-responses, the second unique identifiers are identical to the first unique identifier of the corresponding sub-request; and

- means for sending the response, wherein generating the response to the request is performed by matching the sub-responses to the sub-requests based on the first and second unique identifiers.

21.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 20, wherein the means for selecting the asynchronous or synchronous communication mode comprises a set of rules to be applied on the request.

22.   (Original) The data processing system of claim 21, wherein the means for splitting the request into a set of sub-requests uses the set of rules for the splitting operation.

23.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claims 20, wherein the

asynchronous communication means is to check the database for completeness for each incoming sub-response.

24.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 23, wherein the asynchronous communication means is to perform the check of the database by performing a database query using the sub-request and sub-response identifiers as keys.

25.   (Currently Amended) A method for processing a request <u>for an item </u>comprising:
        -selecting an asynchronous or synchronous communication mode for communication with partner computer systems,
        -splitting the request into a set of sub-requests by a central data processing system, <u>wherein each sub-request is for a sub-item of the item and each sub-item is mapped to the item based on an item identifier associated with the item and a sub-item identifier associated with the sub-item</u><s>wherein each sub-request is associated with at least one item of the request</s>,
        -if the synchronous communication mode has been selected: sending a first one of the sub-requests of the set to one of the partner computer systems, waiting for the respective sub-response from the one of the partner computer systems, sending a second one of the sub-requests of the set to a second one of the partner computer systems after the sub-response from the first one of the partner computer systems has been received, wherein the sub-responses are stored in a random access memory with the associated item by the central data processing system,
        -if the asynchronous communication mode has been selected: sending a plurality of the sub-requests in parallel to partner computer systems, storing respective sub-responses of the partner computer systems in a database on a non-volatile storage device with the associated item by the central data processing system,
        -generating a first unique identifier for each of the sub-requests, each of the first unique identifiers are generated by the data processing system;
        -generating a second unique identifier for each of the sub-responses, each of the second unique identifiers are identical to the first unique identifier of the corresponding sub-request; and
        -combining the sub-responses to generate a response to the request, wherein generating the response to the request is performed by matching each sub-response to each

sub-request based on the first and second unique identifiers; and

      -sending the response to the requestor.

26.   (Original) The data processing method of claim 25, wherein a set of rules is used for selecting the asynchronous or the synchronous communication mode and for splitting the request into a set of sub-requests.

27.   (Previously Presented) The data processing methods of claim 25, further comprising checking the asynchronous communication mode, checking the database for completeness with each incoming sub-response.

28.   (Original) The data processing method of claim 27, wherein a database query is performed for each incoming sub-response, in order to determine whether all sub-responses for the request have been received.

29.   (Cancelled)